



A Conversation with Ray Hyman, PhD

with special guest D.J. Grothe

Ray Hyman is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Oregon, where he has taught since 1961. As a psychologist and amateur magician, he has critiqued experiments with prominent psychics and other psychic claimants conducted by private scientific and government organizations. Despite intense controversies, he has managed to maintain the respect of both parapsychologists and fellow skeptics. As a well-informed outside critic, he is often credited with helping improve the quality of parapsychological research. He has cautioned skeptics on the need to become better informed about the research they criticize.

Hyman's published research has been in such areas as pattern recognition, perception, problem solving, creativity, and related areas of cognition. He has written and published extensively on the psychology of deception and critiques of paranormal and other fringe claims. His books include *Mathematics for Psychologists* (1955, coauthored with R. Bush and R.P. Abelson); *Water Witching U.S.A.* (1959 and 2000, coauthored with E.Z. Vogt); *The Nature of Psychological Inquiry* (1964); and *The Elusive Quarry: A Scientific Appraisal of Psychical Research* (1989). He is currently working on two books, entitled *How Smart People Go Wrong: Cognition and Human Error* and *Parapsychology's Achilles' Heel: Consistent Inconsistency*.

Hyman received his Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University and taught at Harvard University from 1953 to 1958. He has also been a consultant to the General Electric Company, a Fulbright-Hays research scholar (University of Bologna), a National Science Foundation faculty fellow, and a visiting professor of psychology at Stanford University. His numerous publications include several books, encyclopedia chapters, and technical articles in such journals as *Proceedings of the IEEE* and the *Journal of Parapsychology* and articles on topics related to parapsychology that have appeared in both parapsychological and other journals. He was a founding member of the Committee for Skeptical

Inquiry (formerly CSICOP), and serves as a Fellow and Member of its Executive Council. Hyman has served on a variety of governmental committees, including the American Institutes for Research panel contracted by CIA to evaluate the Department of Defense "Star Gate" program of "remote viewing" (i.e., the ability to describe locations one has not visited) in the 1990s.

NCAS will be honoring Professor Hyman with the 2010 Philip J. Klass Award for outstanding contributions in promoting critical thinking and scientific understanding.

Special guest D.J. Grothe, president of the James Randi Educational Foundation and host of its podcast *For Good Reason*, will interview Professor Hyman following presentation of the award.



**Saturday, April 24, 2010
1:30 pm**

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Torn From Today's (& Yesterday's) Headlines Psychics and Unsolved Crimes

WUSA-TV 9 News recently televised a story on the 35th anniversary of the unsolved March 25, 1975 disappearance of the Lyon sisters, two youngsters who were last seen while walking home from Wheaton Plaza in suburban Maryland. Unmentioned in the segment was the involvement of notorious "psychic" Peter Hurkos in the futile search for the missing girls.

The *Washington Post* reported on May 25, 1975 that Hurkos had recommended to the Montgomery County Police that the Granby Woods area of Rock Creek Park between Laytonsville and Olney be searched. With no other leads to follow at that point, 12 county policemen joined 135 Maryland Army National Guardsmen, along with 2 National Guard helicopters, to search the area for two bodies "covered with leaves." The several-hour search ended without success, costing about \$3,000. (After summoning the National Guard, the state's acting governor told reporters that the police were acting on what they believed to be "a solid tip.")

The *Post* article uncritically mentioned Hurkos' previous "effort to help police solve the [early 1960s] 'Boston Strangler' murders" but, to its credit, also briefly mentioned a 1960 fiasco that ensued when Hurkos' services were enlisted by Virginia State Police investigating the murders of the Jackson family in the Spotsylvania area the year before. In that case psychiatrist F. Regis Riesenman, M.D., assistant chief of the William A. White Service at St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, suggested Hurkos' services to the police. Based on "emanations" Hurkos received during a visit to the site where some of the victims' bodies had been found, he advised authorities to search for a man whose business was "either junk or garbage." Police then arrested trash collector John Tarmon, but found no evidence linking him to

the crime. Instead police convinced his wife to commit him to a mental hospital. A hastily convened hearing during predawn hours (by a commission that included Riesenman) deemed Tarmon insane and had him committed to a mental hospital for the criminally insane. He remained there for three weeks while the American Civil Liberties Union worked to secure his release. (The details of the Tarmon incident are available online in the ACLU's 1959-1960 annual report.) He was released as sane a week after the FBI arrested another man (a jazz musician named Melvin Rees Jr.) for the crime, identified through conventional police work. ☒

Drinking Skeptically

On Wednesday, April 14, come to Jackie's new Sidebar at 8081 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring, MD, at 7:00 p.m. to join fellow NCASers for the next DC-area Drinking Skeptically event. Drinking Skeptically is an informal social event designed to promote fellowship and networking among skeptics, critical-thinkers, and like-minded individuals. There's no cover charge and all are welcome.

Don't drink? Don't let that stop you from joining us! Some of the world's most famous skeptics are teetotalers, and we are happy to have you!

ncas.org/ds-ncas.html
www.jackiesrestaurant.com
www.drinkingskeptically.org

The new Sidebar connects to the restaurant & lounge where we previously met, but is a new space of its own. It will have its own limited menu, although you can always dine next door at the restaurant. (January's *Washingtonian* magazine rated Jackie's #82 of all DC-area restaurants.)

Remember that drinking skeptically means drinking responsibly. If there's one thing science has taught us, it's the effects of alcohol on the human body. ☒